

## SOURCE WATER PROTECTION

### What does the indicator tell us?

To protect drinking water sources even before water is withdrawn by a supplier, EPA has instituted the Source Water Protection Program. Currently, the program protects ground water used for drinking water by requiring the (1) delineation of the ground water area to be protected, (2) identification of potential sources of contamination, (3) development of contingency plans in case of a threat to the drinking water source, and (4) development of source management plans to control potential sources of contamination. Source water protection will be extended to surface waters.

This indicator focuses on state progress in implementing the critical elements of ground water protection programs established to protect drinking water sources. Approximately 3,800 of the 60,000 community drinking water systems are covered by all four parts of the ground water protection program.

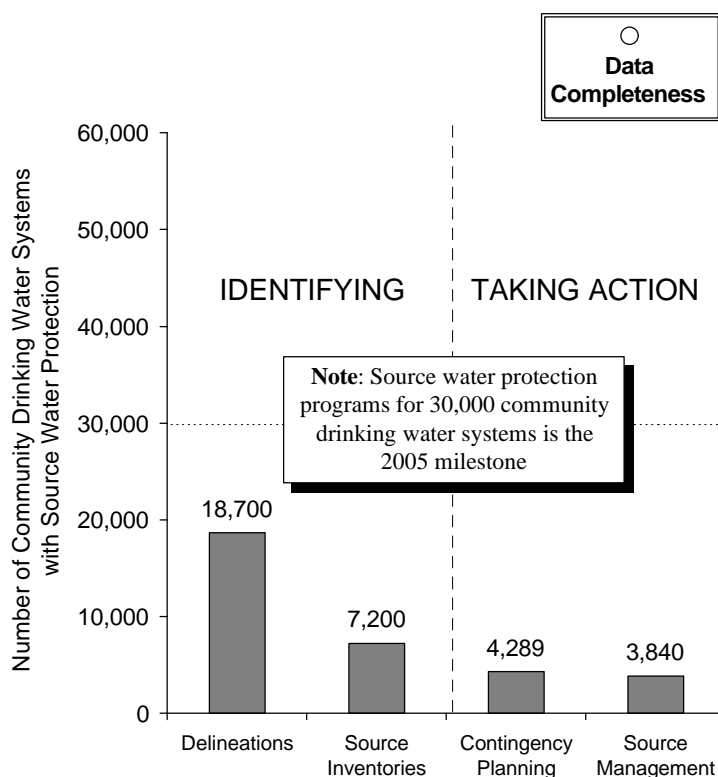
### How will the indicator be used to track progress?

The Safe Drinking Water Act established EPA's Wellhead Protection (WHP) program. The WHP program requires states to develop systematic and comprehensive programs to protect public ground water supplies. To measure progress toward implementing ground water

protection programs, EPA will track local-level implementation through the WHP program report. States are required to produce these reports every 2 years in an effort to update EPA and the public on the status of their drinking water protection programs.

These reports will help in determining the reduction in the number of people potentially exposed to harmful contaminants found in ground

### INDICATOR 4: Source Water Protection



Source: State Biennial Wellhead Reports to EPA, 1993

**Proposed Milestone:** By 2005, 60 percent of the population served by community water systems will receive their water from systems with source water protection programs in place.

water used as a community drinking water source. It also will assess the adequacy of the pollution prevention controls that are critical to the safety of ground water used as drinking water supplies.

### **What is being done to improve the indicator?**

**T**he 1995 guidelines for the wellhead protection report were expanded to include state reporting of communities relying on surface water. This tracking mechanism will measure not only the number of community water systems with ground water and surface water protection, but also the population protected. As more states begin to establish wellhead protection areas and implement ambient and compliance monitoring, the information might be used to validate the effectiveness of the source water protection program.

### **What is being done to improve conditions measured by the indicator?**

**T**he goal of reducing the number of people potentially exposed to harmful contaminants from community drinking water supplies is consistent with the compliance policies and programs of the current public water system regulatory program. Implementing source water protection programs around water systems reflects a new direction toward preventing pollution at the source.

Prevention is often more cost-effective than cleanup. This indicator might forecast dramatic changes in current EPA policies and programs and might alter what is expected of public water suppliers. The outline of the new approach is included in EPA's reauthorization recommendations, which would provide alternative regulatory programs for water systems in designated source water protection areas.

Well-implemented and enforced local prohibition ordinances can be a primary means for managing potential contamination sources. Also, data on maximum contaminant level violations for nitrates, volatile organic compounds, and pesticides can be used to illustrate the value of source water program implementation in preventing drinking water contamination.

#### ***For More Information:***

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